

CALIFORNIA

OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

PSYCHIATRIC TECHNICIANS

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INTEREST AREA
SOCIAL



WHAT DOES A PSYCHIATRIC TECHNICIAN DO?

PSYCHIATRIC TECHNICIANS work on a mental health team with doctors, psychologists, and rehabilitation therapists. Together they treat institutionalized patients who are mentally ill, emotionally disturbed, mentally retarded, or developmentally

disabled. Their goal is to rehabilitate individuals and return them to the community.

Psychiatric Technicians perform the following tasks:

- Help patients with personal hygiene, such as bathing and with keeping beds, clothing, and living areas clean.
- Administer oral medications and hypodermic injections, following physician's prescriptions and hospital procedures.
- Use thermometers, blood pressure gauges, catheters, hypodermic needles and syringes.
- Take and record measures of patient's general physical condition, such as pulse, temperature, and respiration, to provide daily information.
- Observe patients to detect behavior patterns and report observations to medical staff.
- Issue medications from dispensary and maintain records in accordance with specified procedures.
- Encourage patients to develop work skills and social relationships, and to participate in recreational activities.
- Lead prescribed individual or group therapy sessions as part of specific therapeutic procedures.
- Intervene to restrain violent or potentially violent or suicidal patients by verbal or physical means as required. Work as member of crisis intervention team.
- Contact patient's relatives by telephone to arrange family conferences.
- Complete initial admittance forms for new patients.

WHAT SKILLS ARE IMPORTANT?

Important skills, knowledge, and abilities for Psychiatric Technicians include:

- Social Perceptiveness – Being aware of others' reactions and understanding why they react as they do.

- **Active Listening** – Giving full attention to what other people are saying, taking time to understand the points being made, asking questions as appropriate, and not interrupting at inappropriate times.
- **Service Orientation** – Actively looking for ways to help people.
- **Reading Comprehension** – Understanding written sentences and paragraphs in work-related documents.
- **Oral Expression** – The ability to communicate information and ideas in speaking so others will understand.
- **Psychology** – Knowledge of human behavior and performance; individual differences in ability, personality, and interests; learning and motivation; psychological research methods; and the assessment and treatment of behavioral and affective disorders.
- **Therapy and Counseling** – Knowledge of principles, methods, and procedures for diagnosis, treatment, and rehabilitation of physical and mental dysfunctions, and for career counseling and guidance.
- **Customer and Personal Service** – Knowledge of principles and processes for providing customer and personal services. This includes customer needs assessment, meeting quality standards for services, and evaluation of customer satisfaction.
- **Medicine and Dentistry** – Knowledge of the information and techniques needed to diagnose and treat human injuries, diseases, and deformities. This includes symptoms, treatment alternatives, drug properties and interactions, and preventive health-care measures.
- **Problem Sensitivity** – The ability to tell when something is wrong or is likely to go wrong. It does not involve solving the problem, only recognizing there is a problem.

WHAT'S THE WORK ENVIRONMENT?

Most Psychiatric Technicians work in State and county hospitals and correctional facilities. Others work in private institutions, developmental service centers, community psychiatric or addiction treatment centers. They may stand or

walk for long periods of time and lift, carry, or restrain patients. Patients can occasionally exhibit unpredictable behavior that requires intervention. Technicians are trained in the management of assaultive behavior with techniques ranging from verbally engagement to physical hands-on containment using approved techniques.

Technicians must be responsive to their patient's needs. They must have the special understanding and tolerance required for treating patients who may be withdrawn or display unusual behavior.

Union Membership

Psychiatric Technicians may belong to an employee association or a governmental union. Many Technicians belong to the California Association of Psychiatric Technicians.

WHAT'S THE CALIFORNIA JOB OUTLOOK?

The following information is from the occupational projections produced by the Employment Development Department (EDD) Labor Market Information Division (LMID):

Estimated number of workers in 2000:	11,500
Estimated number of workers in 2010:	12,000
Projected Growth 2000-2010:	4.3%
Est. openings due to separations by 2010:	3,000

These figures do not include self-employment.

Psychiatric Technicians will grow slower than average compared with occupations in California.

In January 2003, more than 9,200 Psychiatric Technicians held active licenses in the State. The California Board of Vocational Nurse and Psychiatric Technician Examiners reports that between 300 and 350 new licenses are issued each year. This is a stressful occupation, and some workers exit and re-enter after a period of time.

Trends

The continuing development of new psychoactive drugs, coupled with a better understanding of neural biology, has allowed more patients to be treated on an outpatient basis. This has led to a reduction in the percentage of patients who must

be treated at an inpatient facility. Counterbalancing that trend is overall growth of the population.

This means that over the next few years, demand should increase for Psychiatric Technicians. This is especially true in central California, where a new State hospital in Coalinga is scheduled to open in late 2004. This facility is expected to employ approximately 850 Technicians. In addition, Atascadero State hospital is expected to add another 250 beds in the coming years.

WHAT DOES THE JOB PAY?

California Earnings

Psychiatric Technicians 2002 Wages

Hourly wages range from	\$15.51	to	\$20.54
Average hourly wage	\$17.89		
Average annual wage	\$37,210		

Source: *Occupational Employment Survey of Employers by EDD/LMID.*

State workers in the classifications of apprentice, training candidate, and student Psychiatric Technician earn between \$1,886 and \$2,388 monthly (\$10.88 and \$13.78 hour). Licensed Psychiatric Technicians advance through monthly levels that begin at \$2,617 and go up to \$3,906 (\$15.10 and \$22.54 per hour). Psychiatric Technician instructors earn between \$3,986 and \$4,842 monthly (\$23.00 and \$27.94 per hour).

Hours

The normal workweek for Psychiatric Technicians is 40 hours. Most facilities operate on a 24-hour schedule, requiring day and night shifts, as well as holiday and weekend shifts. Technicians often work a rotating schedule. Overtime work may be required and is usually paid at a rate that is one and one half times the normal pay.

Benefits

Benefits are fairly standard throughout the industry. Benefits for Technicians hired on a permanent basis include vacation, sick leave, and holidays, retirement, and health and life insurance.

HOW DO I PREPARE FOR THE JOB?

Education and Training

There are currently 14 California schools that offer accredited training. Most programs are offered under the community college system, but one adult education program and one hospital also offer accredited programs. A full-time training program requires 12-14 months to complete and a part-time student may take 18-20 months to complete the program. The course of study includes nursing science, mental and developmental disabilities, and pharmacology.

Licensing and Certification

The California Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians licenses Psychiatric Technicians. All applicants for licensure as a Psychiatric Technician must meet the following requirements:

1. Minimum Age - 18 Years.
2. High school diploma or equivalent.
3. Possess a valid Social Security number.
4. Submit fingerprints to the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI).
5. Successful completion of the California Psychiatric Technician licensure examination.

Applicants must also meet at least one of the following requirements:

1. Graduate of a California accredited School of Psychiatric Technicians.
2. Equivalent education and/or experience. Completion of 576 hours of theory (experience may not be substituted for formal course work) and 954 hours of supervised clinical experience within ten years prior to the date of application. Any or all of the supervised clinical experience may be satisfied by paid work experience.
3. Nursing service in the Medical Corps of any branch of the Armed Forces of the United States. This method requires you to complete an Armed Forces course involving neuropsychiatric nursing and a military or

civilian course from an accredited school in the care of the developmentally disabled client.

The cost for an initial application is \$100. The initial license for two years is \$240, as is the two-year renewal license. Other fees may also be charged.

Continuing Education

Psychiatric Technicians are required to renew their license every two years. Satisfactory completion of 30 hours of continuing education is required for an active license. Licensees must also certify whether they have been convicted of a crime since they last renewed.

HOW DO I FIND THE JOB?

Direct application to employers remains one of the most effective job search methods. Psychiatric Technicians should contact personnel offices of counties, county mental health facilities, the California Department of Mental Health, and the California Department of Developmental Services. For employment opportunities for Psychiatric Technicians with the State of California, visit the State Personnel Board Web site at www.spb.ca.gov. Psychiatric Technicians should also apply directly to local psychiatric centers, developmental service centers, and community mental health centers. Employers may list openings through mental health associations, Psychiatric Technician training centers, and newspaper classified ads. California job openings can be found at various online job-listing systems including CalJOBSSM at www.caljobs.ca.gov or at America's Job Bank at www.ajb.dni.us.

For other occupational and wage information and a listing of the largest employers in any county, visit the Employment Development Department Labor Market Information Web page at www.calmis.ca.gov. Find further job search assistance from your nearest Job Service office www.edd.ca.gov/jsloc.htm or the closest One-Stop site listed on the California WorkNet site, www.sjtcc.ca.gov/sjtccweb/one-stop.

WHERE CAN THIS JOB LEAD?

Workers for the State of California in the classifications of apprentice, training candidate, and student Psychiatric Technician advance into the Psychiatric Technician series after completing licensing requirements. After one year of service, Technicians working for State facilities can advance to Senior Psychiatric Technician. Other advancement opportunities are unit supervisor, developmental specialist, nursing coordinator, program assistant, program director, and clinical director. Most of these positions require additional education and on-the-job training. Job-related training coursework is usually paid or partially paid by the employing agency. The advancement system is similar for county agencies. Most private facilities are willing to give Technicians further training and promote them to higher paying positions when they are qualified.

OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION

California Board of Vocational Nursing
and Psychiatric Technicians
2535 Capital Oaks Drive, Suite 205
Sacramento, CA 95833
(916) 263-7800
www.bvnpt.ca.gov

California Association of Psychiatric
Technicians
2000 O Street, Suite 250
Sacramento, CA 95814-5286
(916) 329-9140
(800) 677-2278
www.psych-health.com

Employment Projections by Occupation
www.calmis.ca.gov/htmlfile/subject/occproj.htm

Employment and Wages by Occupation
[www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup\\$/OES\\$.htm](http://www.calmis.ca.gov/file/occup$/OES$.htm)

RELATED OCCUPATIONAL GUIDES

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Nursing Aides and Orderlies	No. 442
Home Health Aides	No. 461

OCCUPATIONAL CODE REFERENCES

SOC (*Standard Occupational Classification*)

Psychiatric Technicians 29-2053

O*NET (*Occupational Information Network*)

Psychiatric Technicians 29-2053.00

OES (*Occupational Employment Statistics*)

Psychiatric Technicians 32931

DOT (*Dictionary of Occupational Titles*)

Psychiatric Technician 079.374-026

